EDITH DELORES THOMPSON PALMER

Edith Delores Thompson Palmer, age 86, of Boynton Beach, FL transitioned safely into the arms of her Heavenly Father on February 10, 2012. Mrs. Palmer was a devoted and active Christian woman who was a member of St. John Missionary Baptist Church for more than fifty-five years. She served as a leader, teacher and spiritual advisor in her church and civic community. For a span of more than 20 years, she was the Spiritual Guidance Counselor to the Matrons and served dutifully in the oversight of the spiritual and religious life of the appointed woman of the church as President of the Deaconess Board.

She was born in Boynton Beach, FL on October 15, 1926 , educated in Cocoa Beach, FL, Coconut Grove, FL and Delray Beach, FL. Following her marriage to Charles H. Jones in 1942, she became a devoted Mother of three daughters. In 1961, she married Angelo Palmer, now deceased. She made her home in Boynton Beach, FL until her death.

She is predeceased by her daughter, Minister Blanche Elizabeth Frugé.

She is survived by two daughters, Minister Brenda F. Miller of Boynton Beach, FL and B. Janice Peak-Gramham of Boston, MA. She leaves loving family and many very special friends, including, five adoring grandchildren, fourteen great-grandchildren, many nieces, nephews and cousins; loving godchildren, and her very special adopted family.

The family will receive friends on Friday, February 17, 2012, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at Shuler's Memorial Chapel, 606 West Atlantic Ave, Delray Beach, FL.

Services to honor her life and homegoing will be held on Saturday, February 18, 2012 at 9:00 AM at St. John Missionary Baptist Church, 900 N. Seacrest Blvd., Boynton Beach, FL. Interment will follow immediately at Boynton Memorial Park.

DELRAY BEACH

Historic black hotel lives again

A landmark 1949 hotel, once the only place African Americans could stay in Delray Beach, will come alive once more.

BY DIANNA SMITH
Palm Beach Post

DELRAY BEACH — Recalling the glamorous stories they'd heard, they pressed their faces against grimy windows, hoping to steal a glimpse of what was once inside.

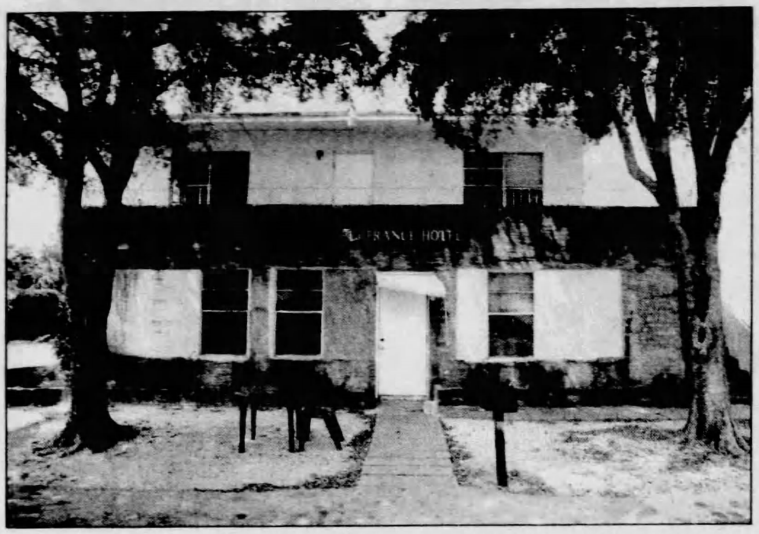
The ladies were too young back then to remember what the La France Hotel was like in its heyday. They had admired it from afar as little girls, from the back seats of their parents' cars.

These women, all involved in preserving the city's West Settlers Historic District, are organizing an exhibit dedicated to the hotel, the only place where blacks could stay in Delray Beach during the years of segregation. The exhibit will open Feb. 4 at the nearby Spady Heritage Cultural Museum.

Except for the weathered sign out front, no one would ever know this building is a piece of history. Patches of the ceiling are crumbling. The roof began to leak soon after Hurricane Wilma. The floors are dirty and the furniture left inside isn't worth keeping.

The building sits lifeless along Northwest Fourth Avenue.

But that's about to change. A city agency has plans to renovate it and turn it into a home for senior citizens on fixed incomes. Bids for the project are expected to go out next month.



BOB SHANLEY/THE PALM BEACH POST

THEN AND NOW: Delray Beach's La France Hotel today, above, and as it looked in a postcard from its heyday.

The women at the windows tiptoed inside. An overwhelming moldy, dank stench forced them to race back out. It was like walking into a room full of rotten eggs.

Edith Palmer, 79, knows well what went on behind those now dingy hotel windows. The way she tells it from her Boynton Beach home, the place had more energy in those days than downtown Delray Beach does now on a Friday night. There was dancing and singing and drinking. People pushed the hallway furniture against the walls so they could swing to the music. Girls pranced in pretty dresses. Men wore stylish hats. Couples played checkers. It was a fine time to be young, Palmer said.

She was the only maid at the La France for 12 years, from 1955 to 1967. She dusted and cleaned and made friends with the visitors. All black. All because, back then, blacks weren't welcome anywhere else. Most were hired help the whites brought down during the winter. Others were members of jazz and blues bands who made the La France their home during South Florida gigs.

The owners, Charlie Patrick and his wife, Francenia, built the hotel in 1949. When it opened that year, it was the only hotel between West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale where blacks could stay, locals say.

Palmer, nicknamed Snooks, was Francenia Patrick's cousin. Palmer helped the Patricks raise their children. She got good tips from customers, but that's because she deserved it. She'd cleaned the 16 tiny rooms, the four bathrooms, the lounge and then the dining room. If it took her all day.

Charlie Patrick had a good heart. He was educated, a businessman, and never turned a soul away.

Palmer refused to take a vacation the first five years of work, so the Patricks sent her to the Bahamas. All expenses paid.

Palmer earned $50 a week.

The hotel had white tile on the floors, ivory-colored walls, mirrors in the hallway and wooden floors in the bedrooms. Pictures the Patricks' nephew painted decorated each room.

Soda and ice machines sat on a long porch, which was later enclosed and converted into a front room.

Diane Colonna, executive director of the Community Redevelopment Agency, said the CRA plans to bring that long porch back.

The CRA is buying blighted buildings with plans to replace them with affordable housing. It bought the hotel for $465,000 in 2003.

INQUEST POSTPONED

Postponement of the coroner's inquest into the death of Rebecca Williams and Martha Andrews, negroes, scheduled for 2 o'clock this afternoon at Boynton was announced Monday by William P. Somerville, justice of the peace.

The inquest will be held at 1 o'clock Wednesday afternoon at the Boynton town hall. The two negroes were killed in an accident at a railroad crossing last Thursday.

Negro Threat Closes Boynton Beach Again

BOYNTON BEACH, Fla. (UPI) — Mayor L. S. Chadwell ordered barricades thrown up on the all-white public beach here yesterday after rumors circulated that a group of Negroes would attempt to swim there.

It was the second time in eight days that the beach was closed to keep it segregated.

Chadwell said he issued the order yesterday as a "precautionary measure."

"We heard enough statements to the effect that they (the Negroes) would try again to use the beach so we decided to close it down as a safeguard against any possible violence," he explained.

Last Sunday, 31 Negro youths bathed on one end of the beach for the first time.

All City Agog As Voters Go To Polls Today

Flaming Pillar Marks Closed Negro Club; New 'Incident' Hinted

BOYNTON BEACH — Burning of a fiery cross at midnight Sunday in the negro section, expected burning of another last night and last-minute circulation of a campaign circular brought interest to a fever pitch as this city faced its hottest political battle in history today.

The cross-burning Sunday night took place adjacent to the Club Continental, expansive negro social center padlocked a week ago as a public nuisance.

Police Chief Charles Tatum said late last night:

"Lt. Frank W. Cline and Patrolman N. O. Marshall, in a police car, went to the scene of the cross burning at midnight Sunday. They talked to a great number of negroes at the scene. The cross was still burning. My men were told that it had been burning for about 15 minutes. We let it burn.

"The negroes seem unimpressed. There have been no untoward incidents since the burning of the cross and I anticipate no trouble during today's election.

"However, if there is any trouble, we'll be ready for it."

Rumors were rife last night that another cross would be burned.

There are four candidates fighting for the three council offices. In the ring are A. E. Shook, C. H. Hood and two incumbents, Dr. F. L. Purinton and Clarence Benson. Two other primary nominees—J. Richard Newlan and J. H. Harrell—withdrew allegedly to throw their support to Benson against the slate of Purinton, Shook and Hood.

Holdover councilmen are Mayor W. Turner Woolbright and Ralph Ross, with Mrs. Edith Tattersall filling out the term of her late husband, B. V. Tattersall, the city's former mayor.

Voting will be from sunrise to sunset or 7:09 to 5:26 p. m., according to Mrs. D. V. Williams, city clerk. The candidates are seeking three-year terms that start in January.

Both Dr. Purinton and Mayor Woolbright, heads of the rival political factions, deplored the cross-burning episode as well as the circulation of the campaign circular. The latter were circulated late Monday afternoon with boys dropping them into autos and leaving them at many homes. The anony-

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Fiery Cross Stirs Boynton Election

mous circulars bitterly attacked the Purinton-Shook and Hood slate.

Dr. Purinton and Mr. Shook last night termed the circulation of the anonymous circulars "a foul blow." "It's unfortunate that this election could not be carried out in a clean manner," Shook said.

Mayor Woolbright, while opposing the slate, also opposed the circulars. "They were apparently printed and circulated by some irresponsible invidual," he said.

Mayor Woolbright also made the following statement with the request that it be printed verbatim:

"Upon learning of the burning of a cross Sunday midnight at Club Continental, I immediately told the Chief of police to make an earnest effort to track down and get the guilty parties.

"After talking to Chief Tatum tonight—and also with various other people, I am of the opinion the political significance of this cross-burning goes very deep.

"In the recent primary election, (Nov. 23, this year) Mr. Purinton, Mr. Hood and Mr. Shook received the overwhelming majority of the colored vote. This was done on what the colored people called an 'Equal Rights' ticket, which was, of course, composed of Mr. Purinton, Mr. Hood and Mr. Shook.

"Sample ballots were spread all over colored town with a big 'x' placed beside their names.

"As these ballots and promises were spread on the eve of election, (primary) the colored voters, not having time to think the situation over, voted as instructed.

"Since the primary they have thought it over and there now is a definite change and trend towards Clarence Benson. . .

(Here Mayor Woolbright requested that emphasis be placed upon his words).

"I am not accusing anyone, but if those opposing Mr. Benson could do anything to change that voting trend and throw suspicion on his supporters, I believe they'd do it!"

Dr. Purinton countered: "The cross burning is nothing but an attempt to intimidate the colored voters and to put the fear of God in them. If the cross was still burning when police arrived, why didn't they put it out?"

While the Shook-Hood and Purinton ticket topped the field more than two to one in the primary, a closer vote was anticipated today.

Shook explained: "Newlan and Harrell withdrew from the race in order to throw as many votes as possible to Benson. The opposing faction has divided into three separate groups to fight each one on our ticket. They are hoping that by voting only for Benson they can concentrate enough strength to get one man on the council and thus maintain majority control.

Both factions called for a large vote today.

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